

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 22 November 2022 at 5.30pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Kathryn Grandon (Chair)
Derek Davis (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:	Clive Arthey	Melanie Barrett
	Simon Barrett	Peter Beer
	David Busby	Sue Carpendale MA MCIM
	Siân Dawson	Mick Fraser
	Jane Gould	John Hinton
	Bryn Hurren	Leigh Jamieson
	Robert Lindsay	Elisabeth Malvisi
	Alastair McCraw	Mary McLaren
	John Nunn	Adrian Osborne
	Jan Osborne	Alison Owen
	Lee Parker	Stephen Plumb
	John Ward	

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Monitoring Officer (IA)
Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Assistant Manager – Governance and Team Leader (HH)
Professional Lead - Key Sites and Infrastructure (CT)
Debt Recovery & Monitoring Support Officer – Infrastructure (DO)

Apologies:

Susan Maria Ayres B.Ed Hons
Trevor Cresswell
Richard Hardacre
Michael Holt
Margaret Maybury BA (Hons) Ch Th
Mark Newman
Zachary Norman

36 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

36.1 There were no declarations of interest from Councillors.

37 BC/22/32 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2022

37.1 Councillor Simon Barrett requested clarity on the changes that occurred to the quantity of SRA entitlement for Councillors.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

38 BC/22/33 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

38.1 The Chair referred Councillors to paper BC/22/33 for noting.

38.2 The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:-

Gainsborough's House

Gainsborough's House finally opened to the public yesterday and in the past week it has received both local and national news coverage. The facilities inside are superb and the external architecture is really impressive. It is quite amazing to think that a small town like Sudbury now has something like this and I am sure the economic benefits to come for the town will be huge. It is the largest art gallery and museum in the county and all who have been involved with this project should be immensely proud of what they have achieved. It couldn't, of course, have happened without the vision and drive of the director, Mark Bills.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance

The death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak after exposure to mould in his family's flat in Rochdale was a tragedy, and I am sure all members will join me in expressing our sympathies to his family.

This sad case has rightly put the standard of social housing in the spotlight. In the last week, housing secretary Michael Gove has written to all housing providers in England, including Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils, calling for an urgent assessment of homes to provide reassurance over standards.

But we didn't have to wait for government to act with this letter: we have already initiated work to address this. Members will be aware that we initiated a full diagnostic review of Building Services earlier in the year. This picked up the need to increase our input into resolving issues around mould and damp.

We have acted on these recommendations. This year, for example, we have trained more people to deliver damp and mould treatment and employed a Damp Specialist Surveyor. We are in the process of recruiting another surveyor to increase capacity.

The well-being of our tenants has always been a priority. Following this case, I can promise members that we will redouble our efforts to ensure the quality of all our homes so that such a tragedy can never happen here.

I have spoken to our new Housing Director, Deborah Fenton, who has updated me on the action already taken this year to resolve any damp and mould issues and further measures planned.

We are also progressing well with our Stock Condition Survey and are developing and costing a retrofit programme.

The housing directorate will also be developing a performance framework to be presented to Cabinets and the Tenant Board every quarter, helping both members and tenants to hold us to account.

This work is just a part of what we are doing to ensure our homes are fit for the future. And be rest assured, Cllr Osborne is working hard with the Director of Housing to ensure this, having contacted her as soon as the DLUHC letter was received.

Chancellor's Autumn Statement

Last week the chancellor announced that Suffolk had secured a devolution deal and that we would get an elected mayor. There will be additional powers and, crucially, funding, in areas such as skills, transport, and housing. The county council, supported by the other members of SPSL, has worked hard to put together a proposal that the government has now agreed to and this is really exciting for the county. There has been some confusion about the use of the term mayor and the relationship between this position and the county council administration. I have confirmed that there will be no change to the current leader/cabinet governance, apart from the leader being directly elected. This is dependent on the completion of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill with its additional provisions for alternative names to mayor.

I don't have any more information yet, but we can expect further announcements in the next few weeks.

End of Term Report

We will be publishing the Babergh End of Term Report next week on 28th November. This highlights what we have been able to achieve during the past almost four years. It has been a unique and challenging time with Covid and now the Cost of Living Crisis, but you will see that, nonetheless, a huge amount has been achieved for our communities and residents. It was completed with the guidance of PLG to ensure that it is non-political so that all of us can use it as we wish and perhaps put our own political spin on it in the forthcoming elections. It will be an online document and we will be able to help those without Internet access to read it at our Customer Access Points.

I would like to thank Jane Kennedy and Francine Tarn for their work in gathering the information together and to Brad Jones and Darren Bird who have done a fantastic job creating an appealing and easy to read publication.

38.3 Councillor Simon Barrett asked if the position of elected mayor would be elected and the leader of the County Council. Councillor Ward replied that in a public statement from the current Leader of Suffolk County Council it was stated that there would be an elected County leader within the current County's leader Cabinet model but the term Mayor would not be used.

39 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

39.1 None received.

40 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Question 1

Mr Riley to Councillor Busby – Cabinet Member for Finance

The audit of the 2020/2021 accounts has been considerably delayed. Was this due to problems with the auditor's resource allocation or were there issues with our accounts which delayed the finalisation of the accounts? In case of the latter, what were the issues?

Response from Councillor Busby – Cabinet Member for Finance

The delay has been caused by resourcing within the actual auditors, it's a common problem over 90% of the councils across the country are late with their return. As far as your second part which is concerning any issues, there are no issues that we've been made aware of by the auditors with our accounts.

Supplementary Question by Mr Riley to Councillor Busby – Cabinet Member for Finance

The accounts show for auditors' expenses that there's almost a double charge, apparently on last year on the previous year, for certification are they doing more work for us, what has caused the increase?

Response from Councillor Busby – Cabinet Member for Finance

I couldn't give you an exact answer for that, we will be looking at that and I can come back to you.

41 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

41.1 None received.

42 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS

42.1 The Chair invited Councillor Ward – Cabinet Member for Economic Growth to introduce report CMU1.

42.2 Councillor Beer asked if any further information could be given regarding planning applications for Belle Vue Park, Sudbury.

42.3 Councillor Ward replied that he had no further update on Belle Vue Park, Sudbury at this moment.

42.4 Councillor McLaren asked if it was too soon to know any auditing outcomes of any potential fraud in covid grant programme applications from businesses.

- 42.5 Councillor Ward replied that he did not have any information but would give an update when the information was available.
- 42.6 Councillor Hinton enquired about funding secured for changing places facilities at Flatford Mill and asked for further information as this was in his ward, but he was unaware of it.
- 42.7 Councillor Ward replied that £90,000 grant funding for two changing places facilities, one at Flatford Mill and one at Belle Vue Park in Sudbury had been successful and the facility at Flatford Mill was being progressed. Councillor Ward also apologised to Councillor Hinton that he had not been informed of this as ward member.
- 42.8 Councillor Lindsay queried the figures in paragraph 5.6 of the report.
- 42.9 Councillor Ward replied that the comma should be after the two making the figure £1,002,015.
- 42.10 The Chair invited Councillor Arthey – Cabinet Member for Planning to introduce report CMU2.
- 42.11 Councillor Simon Barrett enquired when a local plan relevant to Babergh was going to be delivered.
- 42.12 Councillor Arthey replied that the situation regarding the Joint Local Plan had been discussed at the previous council meeting and depending on the agreement of the inspectors and able to keep to the timetable, it was hoped that part one would be delivered next year and part two of the plan would hopefully be delivered the following year.
- 42.13 Councillor Parker expressed his concern regarding paragraph 3.3 that refers to CIL debt recovery and enquired what was the total amount of debt that is outstanding.
- 42.14 Councillor Arthey introduced the Debt Recovery and Monitoring Support Officer – Infrastructure, Debby Osak who reported that significant successes had been made so the current figure was not over £500,000.

43 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

- 43.1 There were no changes to placings.

44 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

45 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR LINDSAY

- 45.1 The Chair invited Councillor Lindsay to introduce and **PROPOSE** his Motion as detailed in the agenda.
- 45.2 Councillor Lindsay elaborated on his Motion.
- 45.3 Councillor Ward **SECONDED** the Motion conveying concern towards to the significant discharges and causes behind it, encouraging Anglian Water to rectify the situation and reduce discharges.
- 45.4 Councillor McCraw began the debate by referencing the work of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Flood Management Sub-Committee paralleling the motion, noting that Anglian Water discharges untreated and semi-treated sewage, as well as extracting river water for their supply and requested the Council to prompt additional bodies of authority.
- 45.5 Councillors debated the definition 'major development' within the Motion and while an amendment for '15 or more' was initially accepted, it was reverted to the original Motion to retain consistency with the definition as defined by the governmental National Planning Policy Framework.
- 45.6 Councillor Hurren endorsed the Motion and questioned whether the Motion should be directed at a different body (Ofwat).
- 46.7 Councillor Davis endorsed the Motion and questioned whether information about the destination of sewage water could be included in planning meetings to Anglian Water.
- 46.8 Councillor Hinton endorsed the Motion, commenting that water authorities use of extreme measures was currently a normal operation.
- 46.9 Councillor Arthey endorsed the Motion but tempered expectations that it would lead to significant change.
- 46.10 Councillor Malvisi endorsed the Motion, noting the adverse effect polluted water has to tourism, the below standard of waterways, the health risks to children, and agreeing to a multifaceted approach; to lobby MPs and use the media if necessary.
- 46.11 By a unanimous vote, the Motion was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED:-

- 1. Ask the chair of the scrutiny committee to invite senior officers of Anglian Water plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend a meeting to answer questions on the current levels of sewage discharge.**

2. Ensure that in gathering evidence for future iterations of the local plan, the council consider the cumulative impact of sewage when deciding the overall level of housing and other development. The council notes that decisions about allocations in the Joint Local Plan will be guided by an updated Water Cycle Study. This should take into account the impact of combined sewer overflow spills on water courses.
3. Ask Anglian Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage; whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers or seas, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required).
4. Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.

46 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR WARD

- 46.1 The Chair invited Councillor Ward to introduce and **PROPOSE** his Motion - Introduction to the Model Debate Not Hate Campaign.
- 46.2 Councillor Ward elaborated on the Motion that was in the agenda.
- 46.3 Councillor Carpendale **SECONDED** the Motion and acknowledged the difficult role of a councillor in divisive issues and the inexcusable danger that arises from inevitable division.
- 46.4 Councillor Melanie Barrett requested clarification on 'zero tolerance' and Councillor Ward clarified it was towards any kind of abuse of any councillor or officer but that precise actions would be situational.
- 46.5 Councillor Melanie Barrett voiced concern of the persisting problem, specifically online, despite the Councillor Code of Conduct, the Nolan Principles, and the Motion, and appealed for greater care with councillor media use.
- 46.6 Councillor Beer commented how this Motion would have assisted the Council with previous matters.
- 46.7 Councillor Dawson requested clarity from Councillor Ward that the Motion would reach behaviour within the executive, to which Councillor Ward reiterated 'zero tolerance' and noted that previous matters were resolved.
- 46.8 Councillor Malvisi commented on the definition of hate, and the hurt of names and words.

46.9 Councillor Fraser remarked on the vagueness of the application of the Motion and requested further support for newly elected Councillors, to which Councillor Ward agreed for a review.

46.10 Councillor Davis commented that he had apologised for previous matters and endorsed the Motion.

46.11 Councillor Simon Barrett expressed doubt about the effectivity of the Motion.

46.12 By a vote of 24 votes for and 1 vote against, the Motion was **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED:-

This council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

This council therefore commits to challenge the normalisation of abuse against councillors and uphold exemplary standards of public and political debate in all it does. The council further agrees to sign up to the LGA's Debate Not Hate campaign. The campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support for local politicians facing abuse and intimidation.

In addition, the council resolves to:

- **Write to the local Member of Parliament to ask them to support the campaign**
- **Write to the Government to ask them to work with the LGA to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians**
- **Regularly review the support available to councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and councillor safety**
- **Work with the local police to ensure there is a clear and joined-up mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families**
- **Take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 6.55pm

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Chair